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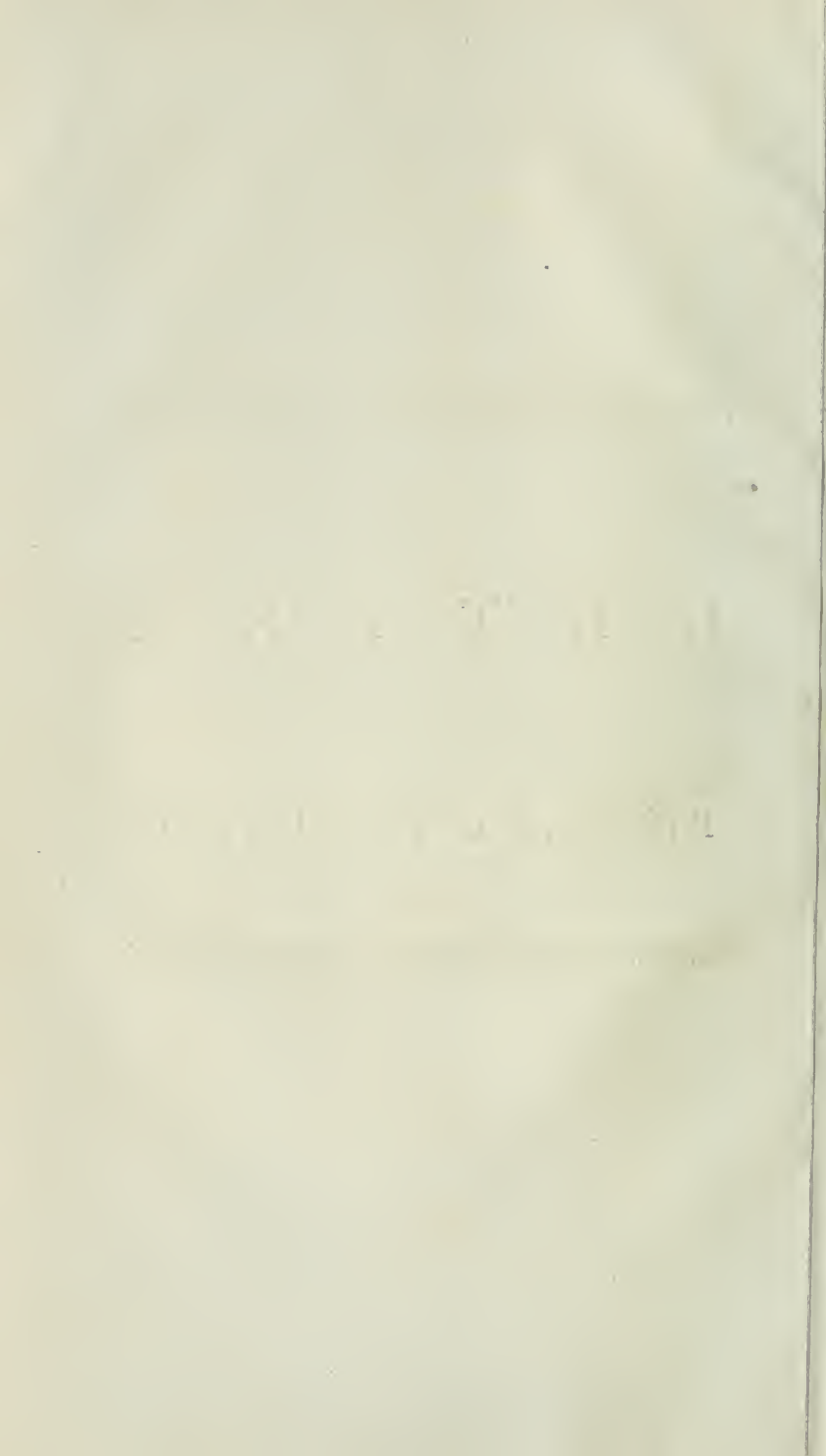
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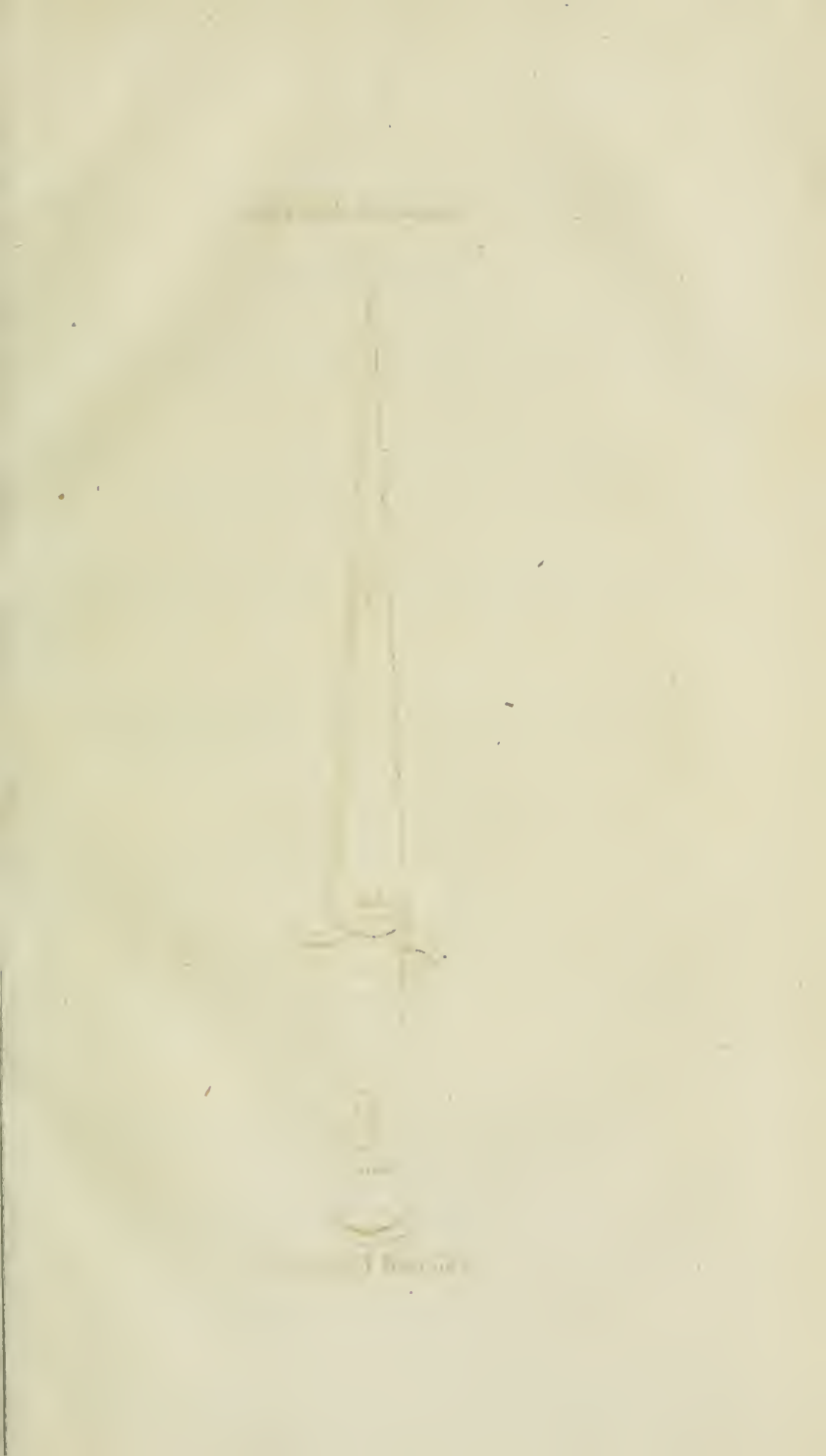
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Fronting the Title Page.



The Haft Eight Feet.

A
L E T T E R
TO THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND,
RECOMMENDING
A Simple, Cheap, and Effectual Method
OF
DEFENDING THEMSELVES
AND
THEIR COUNTRY,
AT THIS
ALARMING JUNCTURE.

By JOHN HALE, *Lieut. General, &c.*

Funger vice Cotis

L O N D O N:
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M,DCC,LXXXI.

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A
L E T T E R
TO THE
PEOPLE OF ENGLAND, &c.

Friends and Countrymen.

I Presume it will not be necessary to apologise for submitting to your consideration, a plan, which, tho' very simple in itself, involves according to my humble opinion, the dearest and best interests of this country ; I mean our safety, our liberty and our property, I shall not take up your time in saying much of myself, in two words I shall explain my political wishes, *Peace and Liberty*, all I say, all I write, and all I shall ever do as a politician has a direct tendency to these capital objects, and when ever I loose sight of them I must be supposed to have lost my way.

B

In

In the first place then I lay it down as a fundamental position in a free country, the *sine quâ non*, that *the people* should be armed, without this precaution, all the laws that ever were written are of no consequence, Locke and Milton have wrote and Sydney and Hampden have bled in vain, the bill of rights and magna charta are mere waste paper, empty claims, to be trampled upon or thrown into the fire by the first invader or tyrant who is strong enough to make his will the law.

I give it then as my opinion, that we *should arm*; but least I should give any alarm to cautious, prudent, and peaceable people, I shall endeavour to remove all the objections to this measure which have occurred to me, and prove myself as prudent, as cautious, and as peaceable as my neighbours, at least as much as is consistent with my notions of safety, peace and liberty. It is said by those who are averse to arming the people, that the first use they make of
 their

their weapons will be to cut each others throats, I am sure no one would be more sorry to see such a use made of them than myself, I protest I do not foresee, or at all apprehend any such consequence; but judging from my own feelings, wishing well to myself and my neighbour, and bearing enmity to no man, I cannot see the least inconvenience that we should both of us be prepared against the attempts of those who may be less charitably inclined. Admitting however, for the sake of argument what, I am convinced is not the truth, that the people in general were abandoned and profligate I do not admit that they ought not to be trusted with arms, on the contrary I think the sooner they are furnished with them and the sooner they exterminate each other the better, for in such a case they would not be fit to live; another reason given is that the lower orders of people, if armed, might be dangerous to their superiors, I think it will be the fault of their superiors if they are; but pray who are

the people who furnish the army with recruits and the militia with substitutes? these are not only the lower orders of the people, but those who chuse rather to carry a musket than work, and whether it is better to trust them with a discretionary power over our lives and liberties, or those who industriously ply the loom and hold the plough will scarce bare a question. In addressing myself to the people, I beg it may be understood, that I include in that appellation, all orders of men from the prince to the peasant; and whig and tory, all sects, all parties are interested in a plan, which will secure the lives, the liberties, and the property of all without distinction; it would be a loss of time and words to dwell upon the danger of our present situation, every one knows that we are engaged in a war of the greatest extent and magnitude with neighbouring nations, whose wealth, population, and resources abundantly exceed those of this country; I shall not examine the justice or injustice of this war, its origin
or

or its progress, much less shall I draw a parallel between the people of America and the people of England, or give an opinion upon a question that has sometimes been agitated whether we who are scalping, burning and plundering the Americans because they will not be taxed without being represented, do not ourselves submit to taxation without representation; these serious matters will be more properly discussed by the people at large, who are at this moment in most of the counties of England anxiously employed in the investigation and assertion of their political rights, all I insist upon at present is, what may be called the *main chance*, the *safety* of the whole: Every body knows there are two parties in this kingdom, that each aspires to be uppermost and each to govern the other, perhaps it is a matter of little consequence to which I incline, I shall say however without scruple, that I incline to the opposition, not that upon the whole I think them infallible, but because they have neither

ther advised nor supported the measure of the American war, a measure which perhaps the ministry themselves would never have adopted, if they had not preferred their own places and emoluments to the wellfare of their country; What has lately happened will I hope convince the unprejudiced part of the community, how necessary it is to have a free parliament, thro' the medium of which the people may have a proper controul over their rulers whoever they may be, for I can never believe that any minister would have dared in the face of a free parliament, to have proscribed three millions of his fellow subjects and entailed upon his country unquestioned and unpunished all the horrors of a civil and a foreign war. To prove the necessity and expediency of arming the people, it will not be amiss to cast an eye upon the other powers of Europe, we shall see France and Spain and Germany, Russia, Denmark and Sweden groaning under the yoke of a military government, why? because the
people

people are unarmed and there is no proper counterpoise to the enormous power of their standing armies; Why are the Americans, why are the Irish, why are the Swifs, why are the Dutch, (whom we are now re-paying with ingratitude for that salvation they afforded us in 1688) a free people? Let history and your own experience tell you, because they were armed; The people of this country in former days were all armed, thence comes the name of *Wapontack*, to denote a district whose inhabitants were obliged to take up weapons against invaders; In Queen Elizabeth's time 12000 men marched out of the town and parish of Halifax to assist the crown against the Earl of Westmoreland; I need not recite the perils to which this country has been since exposed, by a disuse of this salutary right; In many instances, particularly during the reign of the Stuarts, there has been no law but the law of the strongest, and when at last the kingdom ventured to call the Prince of Orange to deliver us from bigotry and slavery, our liberty depended

depended upon an easterly wind, upon the defection of King James's forces, and the generous efforts of (friendly indeed but,) a foreign and mercenary army. Before I proceed any farther, I think it proper to say that I am authoris'd by the law of nature and by the law of the land, in all I assert touching the right of the people to carry arms, and my assertion may suffice till some lawyer shall take upon him to refute me which I defy all Westminster Hall to do. In short what I propose is a lasting barrier against foreign force and internal oppression; for as an able writer has lately observed the security and consequently the happiness of a free people does not consist in their belief, however firm, that the executive power will not attempt to invade their just rights, but in their consciousness that any such attempt would be wholly ineffectual.

The present King has graciously declared from the throne, that he neither has nor
can

can have any interest distinct from that of his people, and that he will make the laws the rule and measure of his conduct; but as Ministers may sometimes misrepresent the true interests of the people and thereby mislead their masters, and as under their influence laws may be made which would be more honoured in the breach than in the observance; it will be always best to act with Kings and Ministers as the Dutch Plenipotentiaries did with Lewis the XIV, not to consider what they *will do* but what they *can do*, in short, to leave them full power to do good, without any to do mischief; and this leads me to say a word about the King's prerogative (a word I am not very fond of, because of its equivocal and undefined meaning) of making war or peace; It is to be presumed that a wise and good King will never make a war that shall not be just or necessary, but suppose we should have a King upon the Throne, as mad as Alexander of Macedon, or Charles the XII of Sweden, who should take it into his head to declare

C

war

war against all the world, without rhyme or reason, would the people in such a case be obliged to shed their blood and exhaust their treasure in fighting his battles? This is too important a question for me to decide, but I should think that if they did so, they would be as mad as their Monarch; I could mention some wars in which this country has been engaged which favoured very much of Don Quixote and the Wind-mill; but I think the present national debt should be a warning to us not to embark in such for the future, for tho' I am thoroughly persuaded, that the world cannot conquer us if united amongst ourselves in the true interest of the country, God forbid that our Rulers should ever adopt the visionary project of conquering the world, I will not even admit the necessity of conquering our rivals in trade or in war, without a rival in war what would become of our warlike spirit? without a rival in trade what would become of our industry? such was the miserable policy of Rome, that they never
thought

thought themselves safe whilst Carthage existed, “*Delenda est Carthago*” was the favorite language, what was the consequence? luxury, more formidable than their rival enemies, subdued the conquerers themselves and revenged a vanquished world, *Sævior armis Luxuria ineubuit victamque ulciscitur orbem*. I should not have omitted to mention the Norman conquest, where one decisive battle deprived Harold of his crown and gave us a foreign master ; If my plan be established, I hope an Invader must fight as many battles and obtain as many victories as there are counties in the kingdom before he saw the last of us, and that that remnant would be seen at the extremity of the kingdom defending their liberty in the last intrenchment.

It may be asked, whether the chief part of my plan is not intended to resist, or at least to awe the government, I cannot answer this question better than by asking another, does government mean to oppress the people? if

it does not it has nothing to fear, if it does it may and ought to be resisted; there may arise cases in which resistance is not rebellion but a just, virtuous and honourable self defence, and tho' we had nothing to fear at present no one knows what we may have in future, we have heard of loans, benevolences and ship money in former reigns, and perhaps in some future one, some less barefaced more plausible but quite as effectual a mode may be struck out of taking the peoples money out of their pockets without their consent, and whenever that time arrives and those who are bound in duty to protect shall attempt to enslave the people, all allegiance will cease and we shall have no other party to take but to clap one hand upon our pockets and the other upon our swords, a short Fable will illustrate my meaning. "A boar was whetting his tusks against a tree, what are you at, says the fox, preparing your arms when there is no enemy near? when the enemy is at hand, says the boar, I shall have something else to do."

But

But before I go any further, let me intreat your indulgence, my dear Countrymen, for the irregularity of my stile and composition, I am not used to write for the publick eye, and my thoughts being put upon paper just as they rise, must be offered to your consideration without that order and arrangement which authors by profession may boast of, such as they are, they are the genuine effusions of my heart, if there be any thing usefull or practicable in them take advantage thereof, if not reject, but don't condemn them because they were meant rather to *serve* than to *please* you.

Whilst I am talking of war, I think it will not be foreign to my subject to say a word about a set of *trumpeters* who have lately given their sanction to that state of war in which we are on all sides involved, I mean the Archbishop, Bishops and Clergy of the convocation of Canterbury, methinks I am reading a Bull of the Pope for a general Crusade, when I read their late address to
his

his Majesty, they tell the King, and what is worse, in so doing they endeavour to persuade the people, that for *our sins* God has permitted us to be involved in a just and necessary war. As we do not admit the infallibility of the Pope in this country, much less that of any Bishop, or any man whatever, it may bear a question whether the opinion of the convocation, decisive as it is, will satisfy the conscience of every honest man in this country as to the justice, the necessity, or expediency of that war to the prosecution of which he must necessarily contribute his share of the expence, and in which he may by the law of the land, be obliged to shed his blood; in looking back to the origin of the war, might it not be said that we are the aggressors, by exacting taxes from those who never before were taxed and who never were represented? Does it become the Ministers of God's Word to talk this language of that God whose awful Proclamation is *peace on earth and good will to all men?*

But

But I hasten to the mode of arming the people, because I think the measure itself becomes every moment more necessary, whilst the winter gives us time to breathe, confines the enemy to their posts, and delays that retaliation which we may reasonably expect from their united efforts, for, whilst I am writing, the gazette informs me that Sir John Johnson, a Lieutenant Colonel in the King's Service has *destroyed the settlements of Schohary and Stone Aratia*, and LAID WASTE *a large extent of country*, it matters little to the public whether this officer has exercised a discretionary power against our American brethren, or whether he has acted under the express orders of the American minister, he has certainly carried the severities of war to a most unwarrantable length, wholly irreconcilable to the laws and customs of civilized nations, provoking, and at the same time justifying every excess, which the Americans or their formidable allies may possibly proceed to upon the coasts of this unfortunate island,
driven

driven thus to the wall, we *must* defend ourselves against those whom our ministers have brought upon us, we must be upon the defensive, (tho' we have enemies whom perhaps we might with justice attack) but whether we attack or defend, *we must be armed*, the question is, how? I answer with a *knife*, as you are armed already, no alteration is requisite but in the handle, a common *carving knife*, with a *bayonet handle* is all that I esteem requisite, in the hands of an Englishman to defend his life, his liberty and his property, provided that he can find a broom stick, or any stick at all of a proper length to fix it upon, this little weapon is not only as good as the bayonet, it is as much *better*, as the pole upon which you fix it is *longer* than the musket upon which the soldiers fix their bayonets, for it must be understood that the musket as a fire arm is better not used at all by those who have the courage to use the bayonet, and upon this subject I must beg my countrymen to give me a little credit; they
 credit

credit the Priest, the Physician, and the Lawyer, in many things of which for want of reading and experience, they have not very clear ideas, let me hope then, that in one instance at least, they will trust a Soldier, and not suppose because we swear a little now and then, that we will not scruple to lye; I advance it then as a truth, of which I am thoroughly persuaded myself, that suppose two armies drawn up opposite each other, equal in number, courage, and discipline, each armed with muskets and bayonets, whereof the muskets on one side should be loaded with powder and ball, and those on the other not loaded at all, I say I have not the least doubt, but that the army making use of their bayonets only would prove victorious; this opinion of mine is founded upon that of the greatest Generals who have lived since fire arms were invented, particularly the Prince of Condè, Charles the XII. and Marshal Saxe, and I dare say it will be supported by the Generals of our own time who have

D

had

had any experience in war, or possess the knowledge of the human heart; if this position is granted me, it follows that the musket may be dispensed with, that we may throw away a load of useless wood and iron and a magazine of powder and ball, and of course advance (I wont say retreat because that must not be thought of) much faster than an enemy can retire before us, encumbered as they will be with their arms and ammunition, and here let me say a word en passant as to the immense sums that would be yearly saved to this country by the explosion (disuse I mean) of gunpowder, and the total rejection of ball; let any one look at the estimates of ordnance service for one year, and they will see as much laid out in those articles alone as would kill all Europe, as much as would arm in the most effectual manner, every man in this country, and be a means perhaps of keeping us safe and free as long as we are a nation, we may as well have done with our cannon too, when we are about it, they are like
the

the trunk maker, more noise than work, and an army without them would walk round an army who had them to drag: But no more of this at present, I proceed to my plan and propose that every man from the Peer to the Peasant should be provided with this *knife* and the *pole* to fix it upon, but I must be indulged in a very short digression upon the article of knives, as I think it very applicable to my subject; you must know I have been a traveller, and among other places I have visited the city of Algiers, in Barbary, at this place I observed that six or seven thousand turks, with the children they had had by moorish women, (the natives of the country) whom they call Cologies, tyrannised over the whole kingdom, and to secure themselves in that power which they had unjustly assumed, they would not permit the native Moors even to carry a *knife*; sometime afterwards I was at Barcelona, in Spain, the capital of Catalonia, It is well known that in Queen Anne's time we encouraged the

Catalans in their revolt in favour of King Charles, and afterwards most ungratefully abandoned them to the mercy of King Philip, who shewed them little enough as may be supposed, when I say that besides executions, confiscations, and other punishments, common to people who presume to chuse or to change their masters, he would not allow them the use of a *knife* unless it were *chained to the table*, and I was assured that such a law was still in force in Catalonia, when I was there, tho' the breach of it began to be connived at, I mention these circumstances to shew that so simple a weapon as a knife is considered by tyrants as an emblem of liberty, and should be considered by freemen as a tolerable security for keeping them so; I propose then a general and armed association, for the purpose of repelling a foreign invader or resisting a domestick tyrant; let the King himself, if he approves the plan be the first to give it countenance, let him put arms into the hands of his subjects under this express stipulation,

pulation, that they shall use them against himself, if he should ever dare to be oppressive or unjust, let him always consider his own interest and that of his subjects to be the same, and acting at all times consistently with his own gracious declaration, let him be sure that in so doing he will be always worthy of a crown and will reign (where alone a wise King will desire to reign) unrivalled in the hearts of his subjects; next let the peerage sign the association, what a formidable legion would the nobility exhibit, methinks I see Grosvenor and all the great squares glittering with arms; his Grace, my Lord, &c. at the head of their servants, after these, the Gentry, the Courts of Law, the Merchants, the whole Faculty of Physic (among whom the Surgeons will be a most valuable acquisition to our corps) the Tradesmen, the Mechanicks, with all their several servants shall be associated to defend the laws, the liberties of their country, the lives and properties of their fellow subjects; let no
man

man attempt to make me believe, that the noble Peer, the independant Gentleman, the enlightened Lawyer, the wealthy Merchant, the industrious Tradesman, the ingenious Mechanick will ever rush into the streets with a view to burn and plunder each others houses; they are bound by their religion, their duty, and their dearest interests to defend and protect each other, and nothing less than an arbitrary and impolitick government can ever produce any disorder from a community collected for such laudable purposes; I mean not to exclude the Clergy, if they chuse to take a part amongst us, let them at least give us a good word from the pulpit, if they will not take upon occasion the same active part which their brother Priests did at the famous siege of Barcelona; I will not here take upon me to point out how this armed multitude is to be arranged, the King, the Lord Lieutenants, the Sheriffs, the Justices, the Constables, are the only civil officers which the law knows to preside over the

power

power of a country, all I mean at present is to arm that country, that they may be ready when the occasion or the law calls them forth, which God knows may be too soon, in the mean time it is no trifling consideration to establish the security of the capital, and all the great maritime, commercial, and manufacturing towns of the Kingdom; In the cities of London, Westminster and the environs I don't doubt but there may be mustered an hundred thousand men, and if the rest of the kingdom should adopt my plan, there might be upon an emergency six or seven hundred thousand men in arms; projectors are apt to be sanguine; perhaps I like others may be too much so when I say, that I am not without hopes that this little island may contain an army as numerous as that with which Xerxes crossed the Hellespout, with this difference, *that there shall not be a slave amongst them*; would it not be the extreme of political insanity, that a country containing such an internal strength should be exposed naked and

unarmed

unarmed to the insults of an enemy, and every one knows we are surrounded with enemies more perhaps than have yet declared themselves.

Hofis adest dextrâ ævâque ex parte timendus
Vicinoque malo terret utrumque latus

It would make a fine paragraph in a foreign gazette, that Monf. this or Don that or Mynheer t'other had *destroyed the settlements* of Hull and Burlington, Scarborough, Whitby and Newcastle, Liverpool, Bristol and Exeter, and *laid waste* the east, west and south coasts of England, what would all Europe say to such a paragraph, they would say what I dare say they have said already, that we are the savages as well as the pirates of Europe, that we deserve the same treatment and as little mercy as we have shewn to our innocent and unfortunate countrymen in America, and that Heaven having first deprived us of our humanity had for our sins deprived us of
the

the power to defend ourselves. It may be said that the Army and the Militia will defend us, I don't doubt but that these respective bodies of men will do their duty as well to the King who commands, as to the public who pays them, but they are not numerous enough to line the coasts and at the same time to form an Army in one particular point, besides if our Fleet should receive a single check, or our Army loose a single battle where would be our resource except in the measure I propose, or one of a similar nature? According to my plan, every village will form an armed company, under their Justice, their 'Squire, or the man whom they shall chuse and the King shall approve, in every Hundred or *Wapontack* there will be one, two, three, or more regiments, the same in great Towns or Cities (let it always be remembered that the town and parish of Halifax in Yorkshire alone sent forth 12000 men in Queen Elizabeth's time) what would not our great manufacturing towns be able to do at this time, under the influence and advice of the Gentleman

E

and

and the Merchant? For I will never separate the landed and the trading interest, when rightly understood they are one and the same. Let us consider, before it is too late to call upon them, what 40 of 50000 Colliers might do in defence of Newcastle, the North, and that precious fuel with which we warm our hands and boil our pots in London, these fellows emerging from their pits as black as devils would be looked on as Angels of light and salvation, if with my weapon in their hands they should oppose and repel the attempts of an invader, whilst by these means we are safe in the N. East, let us look to the S. West, and ask the Cornish boys what they will do, I see them too rising out of the ground like the Tutelary Genii of the country and I hear the same voice in defence of liberty and their country which formerly cried out

and shall Trelawny dye?

[reason why.

Then forty thousand Cornish boys shall know the

In these times when parts runs high I
will venture to give a word of advice to
those

those gentlemen who are distinguished by the name of Tories, (a name to which I do not mean to annex any thing more opprobrious than that of the American war) I will therefore admonish these Gentlemen to beware in time of what they are about, they are uppermost at present, and they govern under that corrupt system which they have so often and so justly reprobated whilst they were in opposition, and they have made such a use of their power as the necessity of keeping their places cannot justify, perhaps their reign is hastening to an end, let them then make a virtue of necessity, let them too however late and with as ill a grace as it may be, let them join the people, let those be our passive friends who have so long been our active enemies, and make that atonement which is yet in their power to an injured people, should the Whigs, exasperated as they justly are, assume the same corrupt and uncontrouled power which the Tories must soon abandon, who could answer for *their virtue*, or the *safety*

of their *enemies*. Let us unite then, if any great political Chymist can unite our discordant principles, (as that great man Mr. Pitt once did) let us unite, if not for the love of each other, for the falvation of the whole, let our common misfortunes bring us back to a right way of thinking, let us be juſt to all the world, let us be juſt to ourſelves, and let us exemplify the words of our excellent Shakeſpear, that adverſity has brought us back to our ſenſes.

“Sweet are the uſes of adverſity, which like the Toad ugly and venomous bears yet a precious jewel in its head”: I beg I may not be thought to ſtart viſionary dangers to which this country is expoſed, let any ſenſible, any reaſonable intelligent and diſpaſſionate man advert to the armed neutrality, the Engliſh have long claimed the dominion of the ſea, by which is underſtood the Mare Liberum for themſelves, and the Mare Clauſum for their neighbours, or in plain Engliſh, the right of travelling

velling upon the highway themselves without let or molestation reserving a right, (that is a power) to stop, molest, rob, and plunder other people upon said highway, who should not be strong enough to resist such arbitrary let, hindrance, and molestation, all this may be law, but it is law of our own making, the law of the strongest, vulgarly called club law, which will be submitted to by those who cannot help themselves, and no other whatever, if we persist in this arbitrary, nonsensical, quixotick claim (circumstanced as we at present are and disunited amongst ourselves) the upshot must necessarily be this, that Russia, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, North, South, East and West, the *world* will be united against us, we shall be beat to a jelly, and obliged to receive the law from those powers to whom in the hour of prosperity and insolence we unwisely assumed the right to give it. I mean, that if we are not contented with our share of trade without aiming at a monopoly, in the end we shall be deprived

prived of all, but that not being a part of my plan, tho' not absoluelly foreign to it, I have only mentioned it en passant. After having put weapons into the hands of my countrymen, I shall be asked how they are to make use of them, to this my answer shall be as plain as the weapon itself, *as plain as a pike staff*, suppose a mad dog were running open mouthed towards a man armed with my weapon, need I say that he is to turn the point against the animal and thrust it down his throat? Every man, of whatever country he may be, who attempts to deprive another of his life, or rob him of his property, should be considered as a mad dog and treated in the same manner; it would lead me into too wide a field to treat of the different methods of forming troops before they engage, I presume whenever a people takes up arms they will chuse men to conduct them who have some experience in the art of war, and whose courage and integrity may be depended upon, as to the rest let them take care to
go

go forth *armed with a good cause* as well as a good weapon, and in support of such a cause, if they are resolved to fight, let them *attack* their enemies, and they will have already gained at least half the battle. It will be said—who are you? who presume to offer an opinion to the public and flatter yourself they will adopt it? One short word therefore of myself and I have done, Peace and Liberty are my political idols, I hate all wars and quarrels foreign and domestick, I hate danger as much as another man, and it is to keep it at a distance that I would have my countrymen prepare to meet it, *Bellum ostendite, pacem habebitis*, As the Roman wisely said; But I will never be a tame spectator whenever this country shall be invaded or oppressed: In the year 1759 when this country was under greater apprehension of an invasion with less reason than at present, I made an offer to Mr. Pitt, then Secretary of State, to put myself at the head of the footmen and chairmen of the City of London, this offer, though not accepted of,

Mr.

Mr. Pitt made honourable mention of in the House of Commons, I mention the name of Mr. Pitt, not without some vanity, as having been honoured with his public patronage and private friendship, and I hope at the same time, the name at the bottom of the following letter, will recommend the subject of this to the consideration of the public and be a voucher for the character and upright good intentions of the Author,

I have the honour to be, &c.

Friends and Countrymen,

Your devoted and faithful,

Humble Servant,

JOHN HALE.

Copy of a Letter from the Right Hon.
WILLIAM PITT to Lieut. Col. JOHN HALE.

DEAR SIR,

*SOME Sensations of the Gout
make it not very easy for me to write, but
feeling the warmth of your Friendship as it
deserves, I am in Pain till I tell you in one
Word what a Thousand would not suffice to
convey, that is, my dear HALE, that you will
ever find in me a Friend who loves you like a
Brother, and who can never be more Happy
than in being able to prove to you by Effects
what he assures you of in this short Line,
that he is ever most unalterably and*

Affectionately Yours,

W. PITT,

Saturday Night,
December 19th, 1761.

